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Afghanistan Situation Report

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19 May 1987

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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A Soviet combat operation began in the Jalalabad area last week, while Soviet-Afghan sweeps were under way in Herat and Farah Rud. Insurgent activity inside Kabul dropped, but resistance forces harassed outposts in the city's suburbs and interrupted traffic on the Salang Tunnel highway.

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As a gesture to Moscow, Kuwaiti officials are planning to try to persuade Pakistan to be more flexible regarding the terms it sets for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Islamabad almost certainly will take steps to defuse the proposal.

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PERSPECTIVE

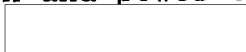
THE LOYA JIRGA: KEY TO POWER IN POST-SOVIET AFGHANISTAN?

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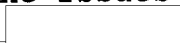
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The Loya Jirga--a "Great Council" of tribal, religious, and civic leaders--has been described by both the Afghan resistance and Kabul regime as the key to power in Afghanistan. A jirga may be the most likely means of forming a post-Soviet government, but the thorny matters of composition and power of a jirga will be difficult to settle.



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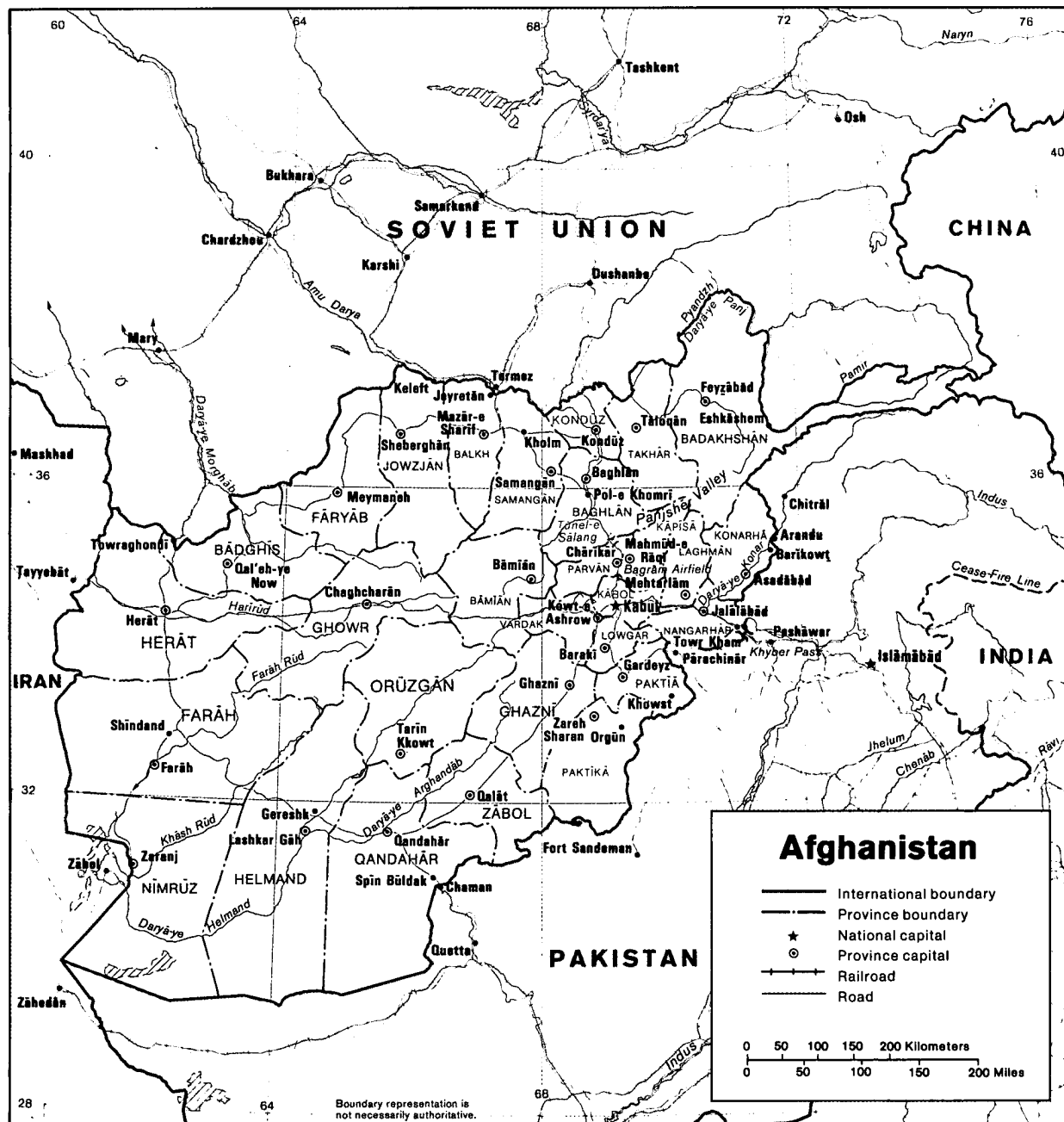
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25X1 [] VIET AND AFGHAN REGIME TROOPS ACTIVE IN EAST AND WEST []

Soviet combat operations resumed in the Jalalabad area last week. []

25X1 [] According to the US Embassy in Kabul, insurgent rocket attacks and bombings in the city ebbed during the past week. Heavy fighting was reported, however, in Kabul's northern and western suburbs, where numerous Soviet and Afghan Army outposts were shelled. The Embassy reported that several large Afghan Army convoys left the city on 14 May, probably to relieve insurgent pressure on the Salang Tunnel highway that was closed for two days by heavy fighting. A combat sweep near Bagram airfield that included elements of the Soviet 345th Airborne Regiment also may have been directed at curbing resistance activity near the highway. []

25X1 [] Soviet-Afghan combat operations continued in the Herat area. [] major elements of two motorized rifle regiments are still out of garrison after nearly three weeks. Six Afghan MI-25 Hind helicopters--fitted with infrared suppressors and jammers--were [] at Shindand airfield, where Soviet SU-25 Frogfoot ground attack aircraft and an AN-26 airborne command post aircraft also have deployed in support of the fighting. []

25X1 [] A village on the Farah Rud in Farah Province was cordoned off by part of a Soviet-Afghan regime task force, while other elements conducted sweeps in the area [] The operation included elements of the Soviet Spetsnaz battalion from nearby Tappeh-ye Sadat ol Hajji

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'Abdollah (Tapa) and an Afghan infantry regiment, probably from the Farah Rud garrison. Six MI-8 Hip and two MI-24 Hind helicopters located at Tapa probably were used in heliborne assault operations in the area.

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IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN INSURGENTS INCREASING

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Tehran's willingness to allow insurgent supplies to move through Iran will reduce the time and cost of transporting them from Pakistan to western Afghanistan. Although the more active Iranian role probably will include greater diplomatic support for the insurgents, Tehran is unlikely to augment its limited financial assistance significantly, given the expense of its own conflict with Iraq.

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Criticism of Iran in the Soviet press and the recent moves toward expanding Afghanistan's ties to Iraq-- Afghan Prime Minister Keshtmand may visit Baghdad this summer--probably are intended in part to signal Moscow's distress over Iran's growing involvement in the Afghan conflict. We believe that Moscow is concerned about improvements in guerrilla effectiveness, the impact Iranian support may have on "radicalizing" the Islamic nature of the insurgency, and the repercussions this may have on the USSR's Muslim population.

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KABUL, KUWAIT, AND THE OIC

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Kuwaiti officials recently told their US counterparts that they intended to use their current three-year OIC chairmanship to persuade Pakistan to be more flexible

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regarding a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Kuwaitis apparently envision direct talks between Kabul and Islamabad under OIC auspices and perhaps including UN Special Envoy Cordovez and OIC Secretary General Pirzada. The Kuwaitis intend to broach the idea with the Pakistanis in June. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: Kuwait probably is undertaking the initiative as a gesture to Moscow. The Pakistanis almost certainly will reject the Kuwaiti plan and will enlist Saudi assistance to abort the scheme. Although US officials report that Kabul is not currently petitioning the OIC secretariat to regain its Afghan seat in the OIC, Najib's regime has been negotiating with the Kuwaitis to reopen air links with Afghanistan and probably will ask Kuwait to sponsor its readmission. [REDACTED]

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IN BRIEF

-- Press reports and Pakistani officials indicate that UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan Cordovez will visit Kabul and Islamabad in June in preparation for the next round of Geneva talks. Islamabad, according to the US Embassy, expects Cordovez to push for Pakistani cooperation in forming an Afghan government of national reconciliation. The Pakistanis, however, will try to keep discussions focused on the need for a short Soviet withdrawal timetable. [REDACTED]

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-- The Soviet semiannual troop rotation, possibly under way in Afghanistan since late April, continued last week [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Large troop formations, processing lines, and Aeroflot aircraft were [REDACTED] at Kabul, Bagram, and Konduz airfields. The last Soviet troop rotation took place from late October through early November 1986. [REDACTED]

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-- Afghan Foreign Minister Wakil arrived in Prague on 17 May to discuss expanding

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economic relations between Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia. According to Czechoslovakian press reports, total trade between the two countries amounted to nearly \$87 million in 1986. Although Prague now ranks as one of Afghanistan's leading trade partners, its trade links with Kabul are substantially overshadowed by those of the USSR, which account for nearly 70 percent of all Afghan exports and imports. [REDACTED]

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- Moscow's Afghanistan correspondent Savodyan, in an interview broadcast last week on the Soviet radio program "Panorama," gave a markedly negative appraisal of national reconciliation's progress in rural areas. Also last week, Afghan Foreign Minister Wakil said the reconciliation program's pace is being slowed by the insurgents' attacks and acquisition of new US weaponry. Such statements suggest that Moscow and Kabul probably are preparing to abandon their unilateral six-month cease-fire on 15 July and shift the blame for the failure of national reconciliation to the resistance. [REDACTED]

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- Mohammedullah Safi Subhani, Afghan Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, was recently recalled to Kabul. Subhani, a Khalqi and alternate member of the PDPA Central Committee, served three years in the Afghan Embassy in Moscow before going to Aden in January 1986. In light of the recent growth in Khalqi assertiveness and political influence, the Soviets may have arranged for Subhani's recall in order to give them another prominent pro-Moscow Khalqi on the scene in Kabul. [REDACTED]

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- Kabul in late April authorized pay increases for Army and police personnel, according to the Kabul New Times. The largest raises are for combat troops who have completed over a year of service. The regime also announced


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the sale of discounted goods to military personnel. These measures will do little to boost morale or dissuade experienced personnel from deserting. 

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- A BM-21 122-mm multiple rocket launcher (MRL)



at the Afghan II Corps area in Qandahar . This deployment indicates the Army is continuing to modernize its artillery assets; BM-21s were issued to I Corps units earlier this year. 

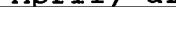

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- Two Soviet TU-154 transport aircraft, delivered to Afghanistan's Bakhtar Airline in April, are in service. 

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 these aircraft are costly additions to the airline's fleet. They are substantially more expensive to operate than Bakhtar's B-727s and cannot carry cargo loads. In addition, the Afghans have had to hire some Soviet aircrews because of a shortage of trained pilots. 

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PERSPECTIVE**THE LOYA JIRGA: KEY TO POWER IN POST-SOVIET AFGHANISTAN?**
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The Loya Jirga--a "Great Council" of tribal, religious and civic leaders--has been described by both the Afghan resistance and the Kabul regime as the key to power in Afghanistan. Loya Jirgas have been called only a few times in recent Afghan history, usually to recognize a new king or approve a ruler's new policy direction, but have served as the model for most Afghan legislatures and advisory councils. Local government has been traditionally carried out by smaller, more frequent meetings among village or tribal leaders known as jirgas, while tribal jirgas have been used for centuries to settle disputes or decide tribal policy.

The Kabul regime has made several attempts to use all three forms of jirga to enhance its own legitimacy. The Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which was drafted in 1980 and has served as an interim constitution, describes the Loya Jirga as the eventual "highest organ of state power of the Government of Afghanistan"--but one that could not be instituted until "conditions are ripe." The Revolutionary Council--Kabul's current legislative body--supposedly governs Afghanistan only until these "conditions are met." The regime has, however, attempted to use tribal jirgas as the basis of a mass mobilization campaign

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Some resistance leaders have also called for a Loya Jirga, probably in the hope of unifying the resistance, creating a true government-in-exile, and further highlighting the Kabul regime's lack of legitimacy. Arguments over who would be eligible to participate have, however, prevented a resistance-dominated jirga from meeting.

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Attempts by traditionalist resistance leader Ahmad Gailani to form Loya Jirgas in 1980 and 1984 to function as a government-in-exile under former King

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Zahir Shah fell through after boycott threats from fundamentalist resistance leaders. A proposal in May 1987 by fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin for elections for a representative assembly in refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan and in "liberated areas" of Afghanistan seems to be closely modeled on a jirga. Tribal and community representatives in the refugee camps have also made extensive use of smaller jirgas--in some cases of as few as five tribal representatives--to solve camp disputes or decide camp policies. [REDACTED]

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A Loya Jirga designed as part of a withdrawal arrangement may prove the most likely means of forming a post-Soviet government. Pakistani President Zia has often suggested a Loya Jirga of delegates from Afghan resistance parties, refugee camps, and perhaps the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) that would draw up a new Afghan constitution and allocate government positions. While moderate resistance leaders Ahmad Gailani and Sibghatullah Mojadedi are willing to join such a jirga, fundamentalist leaders Hekmatyar Gulbuddin and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf have proclaimed they will never meet with Communist leaders. Resolving the questions of who is to participate in a jirga and what powers the assembly is to have may prove a roadblock to peace second only to that of the Soviet presence, but we believe it is essential in order for Afghanistan to have a chance of a stable post-Soviet government. [REDACTED]

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Political Power and the Loya Jirga

There are three traditional sources of law in Afghan society: Islam, tribal codes, and the decisions reached by jirgas. Obedience and respect in traditional Afghan society are based less upon a leader's lineage than upon how well that leader fulfills his duty according to the dictates of Islam and the tribal codes. Afghan kings have ruled by divine sanction rather than by divine right, and a ruler who disregarded Islamic and tribal codes was by definition a usurper. A Western academic who lived in Afghanistan claimed that the jirga--as much as the difficulties of communication and transportation--limited the power of Afghan central governments.

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Because the jirga vote is the basis of a leader's legitimacy--and a second vote could revoke that confirmation--the result has often been an unstable government occupied with keeping the tribes happy. However, the institution also gave traditional Afghan governments a broad institutional base and a degree of popular legitimacy, rare among traditional societies.

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The first recorded Loya Jirga elected Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747 as paramount chief and the first King of Afghanistan. Subsequent jirgas were called to strengthen a ruler's claim to the throne or to approve controversial programs. The most blatant pre-Soviet attempt to engineer a Loya Jirga's decision was made by King Amanullah in 1928. After a Loya Jirga of about 1,000 of Afghanistan's most influential tribal, ethnic and religious leaders rejected the King's reforms--which included calls for separation of mosque and state, the unveiling and emancipation of women, enforced monogamy and compulsory education--the King disbanded it and convened a smaller jirga of about 100 government employees and supporters who promptly passed his program. However, the first gathering was widely perceived as the true Loya Jirga, and King Amanullah--who by defying its ruling had proven himself un-Islamic--was deposed. After a year's turmoil and a nine-month reign by Habibullah, the "bandit king," the new King Nadir Khan assembled yet another Loya Jirga to confirm his authority and revoke Amanullah's hated reform program.

Jirga and Democracy

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All adult men were traditionally eligible to be delegates to a Loya Jirga, and all delegates had an equal right to speak. Decisions were made either by consensus or a show of hands. The decision of a Loya Jirga was binding on all participants, and anyone who disregarded the ruling was severely punished. Despite the similarity with the New England-style "town-hall democracy," where all members of a community have their say, the Jirga was not entirely democratic. Jirga representatives were usually the tribal and religious elite and often appointed to the jirga by the very king

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whose policies they were to judge. The Loya Jirga reinforced this elite's control over the population because they served through the jirga as many villages' only link with the central government. In return for their support, tribal leaders lobbied the crown for gifts and arms, which they then used to cement their own position. [REDACTED]

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Use of Jirgas by the PDPA and the Soviet's

The PDPA has repeatedly staged jirgas in an attempt to gain a popular mandate and bolster its claims to legitimacy. In addition to arranging several tribal jirgas, the Ministry of State Security (KHAD) brought about 2,000 tribesmen to Kabul in April 1985 to convene a People's Loya Jirga. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, delegates were forced to sign a unanimous statement praising the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Attendees who questioned the document or procedure were imprisoned for "pro-rebel sympathies." [REDACTED]

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The regime also held jirgas in 1985 to elect members of local councils in Kabul, Feyzabad, and Saranj. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, a single slate of candidates was presented to the delegates minutes prior to the voting. Regime officials reportedly stood by with cameras to discourage "no" votes. Small children were counted among the voters, and according to a Western journalist, one woman's "election" consisted of a summons from the local party headquarters, where she was given a plane ticket to Kabul and a prepared speech to deliver upon her arrival. Few Afghans took these staged jirgas seriously, according to Embassy reporting, and many Kabul residents reportedly joked that members of a tribal jirga convoked in September 1985 probably were resistance fighters taking advantage of regime bribes and a free trip to Kabul. [REDACTED]

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Resistance Attempts at a Jirga

Resistance attempts to convene all seven Peshawar-based parties have been derailed by feuding among the groups, but smaller jirgas within Afghanistan have increased cooperation among some resistance groups. [REDACTED]

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The resistance has also used jirgas to adjudicate differences with Pakistani tribes and to win over pro-Kabul tribes.

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The Pakistani Government has encouraged the use of jirgas among representatives of resistance and refugee groups to settle conflicts in camps.

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In our view, the greatest roadblock to a resistance Loya Jirga is the question of the council's composition. Fundamentalists leaders, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, oppose the participation of Afghans who have not taken direct part in the resistance struggle. A younger generation of battle-tested commanders is also likely to contest the chiefs and mullahs who previously made up many jirgas' membership. We also believe that traditionalist groups such as Ahmed Gailani's National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA) are likely to contest the legality of any Loya Jirga not formed along traditional lines, and might succeed in blocking any council not to their liking.

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Prospects

We believe the Loya Jirga would be most useful in setting up an interim government with wide representation and an aura of legitimacy. It would also allow resistance and regime figures, including members of various ethnic, regional and interest groups, to work together without losing face. They could meet to draw up a new Afghan constitution and a slate of candidates for government positions and agree on an interim leader to head the government until

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[REDACTED]

elections could be held. [REDACTED]

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A successful Loya Jirga also could help contain the factional violence that we believe will follow the Soviet withdrawal by giving members of all groups a stake in the new regime. Although it will take more than a "Grand Assembly" to heal the hatreds and divisions spawned by the war, it holds some hope of a solution by bringing members of factions together and pressuring them to compromise. [REDACTED]

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In our view, King Zahir Shah's Loya Jirga of 1964 could serve as the closest model for an interim or post-Soviet Jirga. Unlike most previous Loya Jirgas which were stacked with the king's men, this one featured delegates who were appointed and elected from throughout Afghanistan (including, for the first time, six women). Debates were broadcast daily and, in another first, dissenters were permitted to print their arguments for circulation throughout Kabul. The candidates selected by the jirga were later nominated for election to the new national legislature, itself modeled after the jirga. [REDACTED]

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We believe that a Loya Jirga which is widely recognized as a true national assembly could serve as a basis for mutual agreement among warring Afghan factions, but one without common ground for decision-making or a perception of legitimacy could promote continued warfare and serve as a pretext for further Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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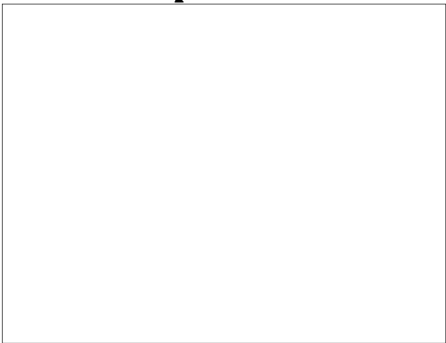
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